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SUBJECT: SWEDEN'S IMMIGRANTS' DISPROPORTIONATELY HIGH  
REPRESENTATION IN CRIME & WELFARE STATS

Ref: Stockholm 192

Sensitive but unclassified. Not for internet.

¶1. (SBU) Summary. Two recent GoS reports show immigrants in Sweden to be overrepresented in crime and sick leave statistics, which are interpreted as being indicators of integration shortcomings. The level of attention applied to the issue of integration stands to increase as we approach the September 2006 parliamentary elections. End Summary.

#### Immigrants Overrepresented in Crime Statistics

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¶2. (SBU) According to a report by the National Council for Crime Prevention published in December 2005, immigrants or individuals with at least one immigrant parent perpetrated about 45 percent of all crimes during the period 1997-2001. In regard to the most serious felonies -- murder, manslaughter, assault and rape -- the percentage was even higher.

¶3. (SBU) A National Council press release about the report focused on other findings showing immigrants are often wrongly suspected of crimes -- possibly in deference to the politically sensitive nature of the crime statistics. The Council report cites failed government integration strategy as partly responsible for the over-representation of immigrants in criminal activity.

#### Immigrants Use More Sick Leave

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¶4. (SBU) Just days after the crime report the National Social Insurance Office issued a report on use of sick-leave. This report concludes that immigrants use sick-leave more often than indigenous Swedes. Those of certain national origins, such as people from North Africa, the Middle East and Turkey, show high rates of sick leave, especially among women. These groups take an average of 34 sick days per year, as compared to 20 days for ethnic Swedes. The report offers as a possible explanation that immigrants often fill low status jobs with low wages and often difficult work

¶5. (SBU) The sick-leave report stated that long-term unemployment can lead to loss of health insurance. Among ethnic Swedes some 5 percent are outside the social insurance system, while among people from North Africa and the Middle East the rate is as high as 30 percent. These people are often long-term recipients of state welfare, which is arguably generous enough to serve as a disincentive to work.

#### Comment

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¶6. (SBU) Sweden's population is approximately 9 million. The rapid arrival of large numbers of immigrants (Sweden granted 873,040 residence permits between 1980 and 2004) combined with a

widely-held perception that immigrants are a burden upon society due to welfare dependence and disproportionate criminal activity, has generated a measure of hostility towards them. Although none of the political parties currently in parliament advocate a more restrictive immigration policy, 1.4 percent of the electorate supported the extremist, xenophobic Sweden Democrats (whose online paper was shut down after publishing the Mohammed cartoons - see Reftel) in the 2002 parliamentary elections.

17. (SBU) Sweden has significant immigrant integration problems, resulting in high rates of unemployment and welfare dependency, and, as recent studies indicate, criminality. Sweden, with its generous worker benefits and high carrying costs per employee, also makes it expensive and difficult to create the entry-level positions these immigrants could fill. Combine the disincentives to job creation with the relatively generous welfare benefits and actual prohibitions against asylum seekers from taking employment, and you end up with an idle group with few productive outlets. These results of these recent studies coupled with concern about local effects from the Mohammed cartoon controversy are likely to raise a notch the level of concern about integration during the parliamentary elections campaign.

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